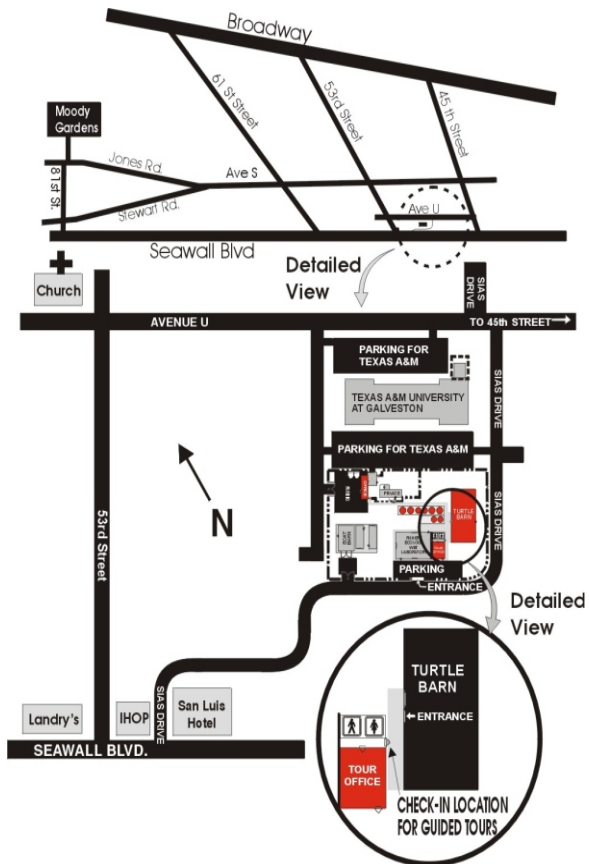


WHEN ARE THE TOURS?

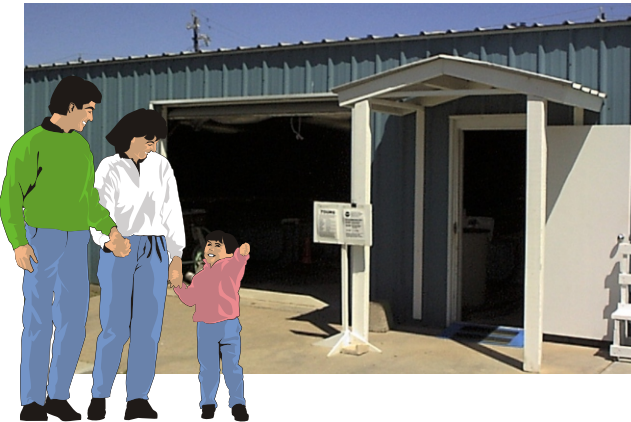
Tours are by advance reservation only. Some exhibits mentioned in the brochure have not been repaired or replaced since hurricane Ike in Sept. 2008

Call 409-766-3670 to schedule a turtle tour or for more information.

HOW DO I GET THERE?



NOAA/NMFS SEA TURTLE FACILITY



COME VISIT US IN PERSON



A two year-old loggerhead sea turtle poses for a photo opportunity.



OR VISIT US ON THE WEB

<http://galveston.ssp.nmfs.gov>

WHO ARE WE?

We are the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Sea Turtle Facility, which is part of the NOAA/NMFS Galveston Laboratory. We are not a public aquarium or a zoo. We are a U.S. Federal Government (U.S. Department of Commerce) Research Facility dedicated to rearing threatened and endangered sea turtles in captivity for use in fisheries research. Guided tours of our facility are offered to the public when staff and resources are available. This is the only facility of its kind in the World. The loggerhead sea turtles are part of a cooperative conservation program with the State of Florida. We are also a Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Center and the Sea Turtle Hospital for the upper Texas coast.



WHAT DO WE DO?

The Galveston Laboratory is known worldwide for its work on captive rearing of sea turtles. All species of sea turtles found in U.S. territorial waters are classified as threatened or endangered, and they are protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We rear sea turtles in captivity as part of national and international sea turtle recovery efforts and programs which are required by the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Approximately 450 sea turtles are reared in our facility each year. Loggerhead hatchlings



Loggerhead skull on display.

obtained from Florida are captive-reared for 2-3 years, used in research, and then released into the Gulf of Mexico or Atlantic Ocean. As we are a research facility, research is our primary goal.



First grade students from a local school are identifying their favorite loggerhead hatchling on a tour of the Sea Turtle Facility.

New tagging methods are developed in the facility before they are used in the field. Sea turtle growth and feeding studies are ongoing at the facility. Captive reared sea turtles are used to test experimental fishing gear designed specifically to prevent sea turtles from drowning in fish trawls and becoming entangled or hooked in longline fishing gear.

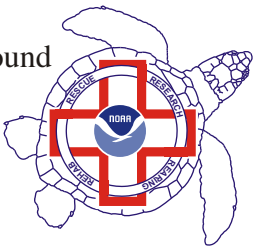
Since 1978, almost 24,000 Kemp's ridleys and 2,000 loggerheads have been reared, tagged, and released. Tag returns from these releases have been reported from the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. Atlantic Coast, France, and Morocco. Growth and migration studies of captive-reared sea turtles indicate they will adapt well to conditions in the wild and are found distributed throughout the natural range of the species.

Thousands of people visit our rearing facility each year. Public outreach and education are vital if sea turtle recovery efforts are going to be successful.

Injured or sick sea turtles found in the wild also are treated and rehabilitated at the laboratory and released back into the wild.



Questions are encouraged - here one of our biologists explains how a TED works.



WHAT WILL YOU SEE ON YOUR VISIT?

You will see up to 450 live sea turtles housed in 30 saltwater tanks. There is no glass or fence between you and the turtles. You can get face to face if you wish as long as you don't touch! Often our tour guides will pick up a sea turtle for enhanced viewing and photo opportunities. Special permits are required to handle sea turtles as they are protected by both federal and state laws. We ask you to refrain from handling the sea turtles because they can deliver a nasty bite. One of our staff biologists will lead you on a guided tour of the sea turtle facility. Your guide will discuss: biology and ecology of sea turtles, the threats to sea turtles, on-going research at the Sea Turtle Facility, conservation and protection measures being employed to save sea turtles from extinction.

Depending on the time of year you visit, you may see one or more species of sea turtles.

Aside from the living exhibits we also have numerous interactive and informative exhibits



A yearling loggerhead poses for a photo - don't forget your camera.



We have a full sized, 40' shrimp net complete with TED on display outside.

on sea turtle eggs, sea turtle tags and tagging techniques, sea turtle skulls and shells (carapaces) that you can touch. We also have two shrimp net and Turtle Excluder Device (TED) exhibits - including a full sized shrimp net fitted with a TED and Bycatch Reduction Device (BRD). Tours run about 30 minutes to an hour depending on the size and age make-up of the group. Tour information is tailored to suit the audience based on majority principle - if the audience is comprised mainly of young students - then information provided is geared more to that age group. Our experienced tour guides can tailor a tour for pre-kindergarten to post-secondary, scout groups to senior citizen groups. If you or your group has a special request or curriculum topic that you would like our tour to include - just ask one of our tour guides before the tour and we will try to accommodate your request if possible. Time permitting, we incorporate numerous question and answer opportunities into the tour.

Our tour guides know much more about sea turtles than can ever be possibly presented in the average tour and we encourage you to tap their knowledge and experience.



A TED testing video is on display in the main turtle rearing facility.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME OF THE YEAR TO VISIT?

There are sea turtles in the facility year round. Loggerhead hatchlings arrive in August/September and they grow quickly. The best time to visit the facility to see hatchlings is mid August through November. The best time to see larger sea turtles is December through May. The end of the school year (March-May) can be a busy time as teachers book large school field trips. Make your reservations early in the year if you plan to bring a group March-May. The Sea Turtle Facility is climate controlled for the sea turtles' comfort. Sea turtles like it hot and humid. The facility is kept at a constant 85°F and near 100% humidity.



Small groups offer the best opportunities to interact with the turtles.

FACILITIES? COST?

Tours to the public are free of charge. Modern handicap accessible restrooms and a drinking fountain are on site. Food and drink are not permitted anywhere in the Sea Turtle Facility and there are no concession or eating facilities on site. Free parking is available on the street. Bus parking is available on the street. If you are looking for picnic facilities, try Crockett Park on 53rd Street - just 4 blocks North of the Ave U and 53rd Street intersection or the Seawall just 1 block south. No pets are allowed in the facility.